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Security Council

Sixty-fifth year

Provisional

6363rd meeting

Wednesday, 21 July 2010, 10 a.m.

New York

President:	Mrs. Ogwu	(Nigeria)
Members:	Austria	Mr. Mayr-Harting
	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Ms. Čolaković
	Brazil	Mrs. Viotti
	China	Mr. Li Baodong
	France	Mr. Araud
	Gabon	Mr. Onanga Ndiaye
	Japan	Mr. Takasu
	Lebanon	Ms. Ziade
	Mexico	Mr. Heller
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	Turkey	Mr. Apakan
	Uganda	Mr. Rugunda
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Mark Lyall Grant
	United States of America	Ms. Anderson

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

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10-45871 (E)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received letters from the representatives of Bangladesh, Cuba, Egypt, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Israel, Jordan, Malaysia, Nicaragua, Norway, Pakistan, the Philippines, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Switzerland, the Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan and the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, in which they request to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In conformity with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite those representatives to participate in the consideration of the item without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Ms. Shalev (Israel) took a seat at the Council table; the representatives of the other aforementioned countries took the seats reserved for them at the side of the Council Chamber.

The President: I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter dated 20 July 2010 from the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations, which has been issued as document S/2010/391 and which reads as follows:

> "I have the honour to request that, in accordance with its previous practice, the Security Council invite the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations to participate in the meeting of the Security Council that will be held on Wednesday, 21 July 2010, on the situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question."

I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite the Permanent Observer of Palestine to participate in the meeting in accordance with the rules of procedure and the previous practice in this regard.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I invite the Permanent Observer of Palestine to take a seat at the Council table.

In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Lynn Pascoe, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs.

It is so decided.

I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter dated 16 July 2010 from His Excellency Mr. Paul Badji, in which he requests to be invited, in his capacity as Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. If I hear no objection, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to His Excellency Mr. Paul Badji.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I invite Mr. Badji to take the seat reserved for him at the side of the Council Chamber.

I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from His Excellency Mr. Pedro Serrano, in which he requests to be invited, in his capacity as acting head of the delegation of the European Union to the United Nations, to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. If I hear no objection, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to His Excellency Mr. Pedro Serrano.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I invite Mr. Serrano to take the seat reserved for him at the side of the Council Chamber.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Security Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear a briefing by Mr. Lynn Pascoe. I now give the floor to Mr. Pascoe.

Mr. Pascoe: We are once again at a critical juncture in the effort to move to serious Israeli-

Palestinian negotiations aimed at achieving a two-State solution. These talks are essential for ending the 1967 occupation and the conflict and for resolving all core issues between the parties, including Jerusalem, borders, refugees, security, settlements and water, as prescribed in the resolutions of the Council and agreements between the parties.

Six rounds of proximity talks have now been facilitated by United States Envoy Mitchell, and both President Abbas and Prime Minister Netanyahu have visited Washington, D.C. President Abbas, Prime Minister Netanyahu and Special Envoy Mitchell each met Egyptian President Mubarak in Cairo on 18 July. The Secretary-General met Prime Minister Netanyahu in New York on 7 July, and Special Coordinator Serry saw President Abbas in Ramallah earlier today.

It remains the shared goal of the Quartet to bring about direct negotiations facilitated by the United States as soon as possible. This should take place in a framework of respect by the parties of their obligations as well as the requisite commitments regarding negotiations. Intensive discussions are continuing. I note that the Arab League follow-up committee is due to meet on 29 July to review progress. We urge the parties not to miss the current opportunity to make progress in these talks and to move to direct negotiations with active third-party involvement and close Quartet support.

On 20 June, the Government of Israel announced a package of measures aimed at easing the blockade on Gaza. The Quartet welcomed this announcement while restating its overall goals for Gaza and expressed the hope that the package would contribute to the fulfilment of resolution 1860 (2009), including for the unimpeded flow of humanitarian aid, commercial goods and persons to and from Gaza. The United Nations and the Quartet are following closely the implementation of these measures.

On 5 July 2010, as a first step — which the Secretary-General welcomed — the Government of Israel switched from a positive list of goods allowed into Gaza to a negative list of goods whose entry is prohibited or restricted. Under the new guidelines, anything that may be used as military material, including so-called dual-use goods and items, continues to be subject to specific, exceptional permission to enter Gaza. Construction items and materials are to be allowed entry only for projects authorized by the Palestinian Authority and implemented by the international community.

Since the announcement of the new policy, new food and productive items have entered Gaza and the volume of imports into Gaza has increased steadily. A weekly average of 780 truckloads entered during the reporting period — a 40 per cent increase compared to the weekly average in 2010 prior to the announcement. Approvals have also been given for a number of additional United Nations projects in the vital areas of education and health.

While these are positive steps, we hope they can be enhanced to address the deplorable conditions in the Strip. Further measures need to be taken to enable exports and movements of people and to streamline procedures for project approval. Our goal remains the full opening of land crossings, in the framework of the Agreement on Movement and Access.

The situation in Gaza has been compounded by the electricity crisis. Given the internal disputes over revenue collection and funding for fuel for the Gaza power plant, the plant's output has declined steadily. The Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process (UNSCO) is active between the Palestinian Authority and the de facto authorities in Gaza to urge a Palestinian solution to this problem.

The Rafah border crossing with Egypt has remained open since 2 June, and there has been a significant increase in the number of people allowed to cross for humanitarian purposes. Egypt continues its efforts to counter smuggling across the border with Gaza.

I am pleased to report that arrangements agreed by UNSCO to ensure that the cargo of the Turkish vessels in the 31 May convoy reaches its beneficiaries in Gaza are being implemented, and agreement has been reached to effect similar arrangements for the cargo of the *Rachel Corrie*. The Libyan-sponsored vessel that sailed on 12 July with aid for Gaza arrived in an Egyptian port without incident. Arrangements are being made by the Egyptian Government to transfer the material into Gaza. I would like to point out that such convoys are not helpful in resolving the basic economic problems in Gaza, and they needlessly carry the potential for escalation.

The Government of Israel has initiated investigations into the 31 May incident. A military investigative committee headed by former National Security Adviser Eiland has issued its report. A public commission headed by Justice Tirkel, in which two Israeli-nominated internationals are participating as observers, is under way. The Security Council has called for a prompt, impartial, credible and transparent investigation conforming to international standards. The Secretary-General continues to be in contact with the parties involved to gain agreement for his proposal for an international panel of inquiry that would be based on domestic inquiries.

Israeli Corporal Gilad Shalit has entered his fifth year in captivity. We call again for his immediate release. The fact that there has been no humanitarian access is inexcusable. We also note the detention of over 9,000 Palestinians in Israeli jails. We urge the completion of a prisoner exchange agreement, as well as releases of Palestinian prisoners to the Palestinian Authority.

The reporting period saw a lack of progress in intra-Palestinian reconciliation based on the Egyptian-mediated proposal. We restate our full support for unification of Gaza with the West Bank within the framework of the legitimate Palestinian Authority.

The Secretary-General condemned the cowardly attack on 28 June by militant elements in Gaza on a children's camp run by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). This is the second attack against such a facility in a month. It is crucial that there be respect for, and no interference with, United Nations operations on the ground, and we reiterate the responsibility of the de facto authorities in this regard. We are also concerned by reports of political arrests by the de facto Hamas authorities.

On 12 July, Special Coordinator Serry and the Executive Director of the United Nations Development Fund for Women visited Gaza to meet with representatives of women and reaffirm the importance of the implementation of resolution 1325 (2000).

During the reporting period, Palestinian militant groups fired 41 rockets and mortars into southern Israel, causing no injuries. The Israel Defense Forces conducted 6 air strikes and 21 incursions, killing 4 Gazans, including 1 alleged militant, and injuring 23. Citing security concerns, the Israeli security forces continue to restrict Palestinian access to areas close to the border with Israel by opening warning fire on people entering this area, killing 1 person and injuring 18, including 4 children, during the reporting period.

We continue to closely follow developments in Jerusalem. In 2006, four Jerusalemite lawmakers from the Hamas-affiliated Change and Reform bloc were charged with not fulfilling the minimum loyalty to the State of Israel, stripped of their Jerusalem resident status and handed prison sentences of up to four years, which they have now served. Following their recent release, they were given 30 days to leave East Jerusalem. Court proceedings are continuing. I wish to stress that the prospect of expulsion of Palestinian legislators from their home city would be a serious step backwards and would undermine the hopes of making political progress.

Notwithstanding comparative restraint on the ground in East Jerusalem in recent months, on 12 July the Jerusalem municipality approved the construction of 32 new apartments in an East Jerusalem settlement. On 13 July the municipality demolished six Palestinian structures in East Jerusalem, displacing 26 people, including 14 children. We have repeatedly stated that the international community does not recognize Israel's annexation of East Jerusalem and that the Fourth Geneva Convention is applicable. The future of Jerusalem remains to be determined in final status negotiations, and a way must be found for the city to emerge as the capital of two States.

The 10-month moratorium on West Bank settlements construction is largely being observed, but it is set to expire on 26 September. We call for the moratorium to be extended and expanded to cover all settlement activity throughout the occupied Palestinian territory, including in East Jerusalem. No further steps have been taken towards dismantlement of settlement outposts erected since March 2001. During the reporting period, the Israeli authorities demolished a total of 106 structures in area C of the West Bank. We reiterate the Quartet's call on 19 March in Moscow for the parties to implement their obligations under the Road Map and international law.

The barrier, constructed in deviation from the Green Line and in contravention of the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice, continues to pose significant challenges to movement of Palestinians in the West Bank. Despite efforts to ease

restrictions on movement and access, the number of obstacles in the West Bank remained at 505 during the reporting period.

Palestinian security forces continued to maintain law and order and to fight extremism in the West Bank during the reporting period, in furtherance of Road Map commitments. During this period, the Israeli security forces conducted 376 incursions into the West Bank, resulting in 74 Palestinians injured and 322 arrested, while 11 members of the Israeli security forces were injured. In demonstrations against the barrier, dozens of Palestinians and peace activists were injured, arrested or suffered from gas inhalation.

There were 21 violent clashes between Israeli settlers and Palestinians in the West Bank during the reporting period, in which three Palestinians were injured and/or suffered damages to their property. In several separate incidents in the past two months, Israeli settlers used their vehicles to run over and injure or kill Palestinians. Settlers were also injured by stones thrown at their vehicles.

I am pleased to report that according to the preliminary growth figures for the first quarter of 2010 released by the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, gross domestic product in the occupied Palestinian territory increased by 12.5 per cent, as compared to the first quarter of 2009. To ensure that the enabling reforms undertaken by the Palestinian Authority are not undermined, continued external financing to support the Authority's recurrent budgetary needs is critical.

There were tensions in the occupied Syrian Golan during the reporting period. On 11 July Israeli policemen conducting a search operation were surrounded by a large crowd. In the course of events, there were reports that more than 40 civilian residents of the Golan suffered from tear gas inhalation and that three Israeli police cars were damaged. Settlement activity in the occupied Syrian Golan continued throughout the reporting period. During this period an Israeli bill that would require a referendum before any withdrawal from the occupied Syrian Golan passed a committee reading.

Turning now to Lebanon, where the situation remains stable, allow me to recall that the Special Coordinator for Lebanon and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations briefed the Council on 14 July on the implementation of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006). Since the tensions in southern Lebanon earlier this month, the situation has remained quiet. Throughout the month, Israeli aerial violations continued. Lebanese Prime Minister Hariri visited Damascus on 18 July 2010, when he led a large ministerial delegation to discuss bilateral affairs. The two Governments signed 17 agreements covering various aspects of cooperation between the two countries.

The Lebanese Parliament has continued discussions on draft legislation on the civil rights of Palestinian refugees. Consensus appears to be within reach, and the United Nations would welcome this as a first step. The United Nations has also focused on the need to ease restrictions on access to the Nahr el-Bared refugee camp. Reconstruction of the camp continues, and the return of the first 2,000 residents is expected by the end of the year. I urge donors to continue to provide vital financial assistance to UNRWA.

In the period ahead, we must work to bring the parties into direct talks without delay on a basis that gives confidence in the possibility of genuine progress on the core issues and on the ground, including restraint in Jerusalem, implementation of Road Map obligations on settlements and further measures to empower the Palestinian Authority. We must ensure that policy change towards Gaza is fully implemented and followed with further steps. And we must place these efforts in their larger regional context and reinvigorate the search for a just, lasting and comprehensive peace.

The President: I thank Mr. Pascoe for his statement.

In accordance with the understanding reached among Council members, I wish to remind all speakers to limit their statements to no more than five minutes in order to enable the Council to carry out its work expeditiously. Delegations with lengthy statements are kindly requested to circulate the text in writing and to deliver a condensed version when speaking in the Chamber.

I now give the floor to the Permanent Observer of Palestine.

Mr. Mansour: Madam President, I warmly congratulate you and your friendly country, Nigeria, on your presidency of the Security Council this month. We express our appreciation to Mexico for its very skilled guidance of the Council's agenda last month.

I also wish to thank Under-Secretary-General Lynn Pascoe for his briefing. In that connection, I wish to express our appreciation to the United Nations, including the Secretary-General, Mr. Serry, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and all the agencies that have been working so hard on the ground during this period, including with regard to securing the delivery of humanitarian aid from the Gaza freedom flotilla and other ships to the Palestinian people in Gaza. We also express our appreciation to the United Nations for its unwavering calls for the full lifting of the Israeli blockade of Gaza.

Three months ago we came before the Council, in its last open debate on this subject (6298th meeting), compelled to draw attention to the extremely difficult situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, as a result of Israel's ongoing aggression, colonization and provocation against the Palestinian people and their land. While we had hoped to inform the Council of progress in the United States-mediated proximity talks and of improvement on the ground, today we regretfully report that the situation remains volatile, due to Israeli actions. It is a situation requiring immediate redress if we are not to lose the opportunity before us for attaining peace. The alternative is to allow tensions to continue to rise, igniting another cycle of violence that will do further harm to the possibility for a peaceful resolution of the conflict and cause more suffering, insecurity and instability.

For some, it seems strange that such a volatile situation persists in light of the international and regional efforts being exerted for a revival of the peace process. Those efforts have raised hopes in the region and throughout the globe and are being followed closely, with all hoping that the problems that have historically plagued and undermined the peace process can finally be overcome.

The proximity talks were supported by the Palestinian leadership, the Arab countries and the international community as a means to bridge the gaps that remain between the two sides. That those gaps remain is due to Israel's refusal to comply with its legal obligations and its Road Map commitment to cease all settlement activities, including so-called natural growth, which, we are all aware, constitute a major obstacle to the peace process. We reiterate that such cessation is essential for the resumption of a credible process aimed at achieving a two-State solution on the basis of the pre-1967 borders.

We believe that the proximity talks would serve to reaffirm the fundamental principles and agreed terms of reference of the peace process and to clarify respective obligations and the status of their fulfilment, including with regard to previous agreements and understandings reached and commitments undertaken in the context of the Annapolis process under international auspices. While a strong international consensus exists in support of the agreed terms of reference — including among the Arab countries, which remain committed to the Arab Peace Initiative — it is clear that Israel continues to refuse to adhere to those terms of reference and commitments and, in fact, continues to carry out policies undermining them.

We believe that the active engagement and mediation of the United States, as reflected in the dedicated efforts of Senator Mitchell as well as by President Obama and Secretary of State Clinton, would compel Israel, for the sake of peace and security, to finally comply with these obligations and commitments, including a settlement freeze. That, in turn, would help build the trust and confidence necessary for a resumption of direct negotiations on the core final status issues — Jerusalem, refugees, settlements, borders, water and security.

The Palestinian side has thus engaged in the talks in good faith. Over and over again, the Palestinian leadership has affirmed its commitment to peace and its willingness to engage in the talks to pave the way for a return to direct negotiations aimed at the achievement of a just and lasting settlement. This commitment has been reflected in both words and deeds and is attested to in numerous multilateral and bilateral reports and meetings, including with regard to the positive and proactive Palestinian State-building programme and efforts to promote law, order and security.

The same cannot be said for Israel. On the contrary, Israel has repeatedly challenged those talks with illegal and reckless actions. It has been the same dysfunctional and destructive pattern since the start of the peace process almost 20 years ago, of Israeli intransigence and arrogant ruses aimed at circumventing its obligations, and shocking acts of aggression and illegal policies that are causing serious harm to the Palestinian civilian population and to the contiguity, unity and integrity of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, sabotaging the peace process.

There is an extremely wide gap between Israel's words and deeds that must be obvious to all. While Israel professes to want peace, all of its actions are absolutely to the contrary. Unlawful and provocative Israeli policies and actions, both by the Israeli occupying forces and by the Israeli settlers, continue to inflame tensions and sensitivities on the ground and throughout the region. This, in turn, is casting a dark shadow on the efforts to resume the peace process, raising grave doubts about Israel's credibility as a peace partner and its willingness to abide by legal obligations and commitments. What we are witnessing is an Israeli Government that speaks facetiously of peace on the international stage while it simultaneously carries out its illegal schemes aimed at imposing a fait accompli prior to conclusion of a peace settlement, making a mockery of the efforts being exerted in this regard by all parties concerned.

In the two-month period since the proximity talks began, Israel has persisted with its illegal measures on a broad scale, in some instances even intensifying them, including by continuing settlement and wall construction in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, particularly in and around East Jerusalem, despite the unwavering international calls for complete cessation and Israel's own so-called moratorium. It also continues to impose the punitive blockade on the Gaza Strip, despite widespread international condemnation and calls for its full lifting, which heightened in the aftermath of Israel's attack on the humanitarian flotilla. Israel continues to impede the efforts aimed at lifting the blockade and allowing for sustained and regular movement of persons and goods and for the long-overdue reconstruction process to begin.

Over 900 military incursions in the West Bank and several raids against the Gaza Strip were carried out by the occupying forces during this period. At least six Palestinian civilians were killed and more than 120 injured in Israeli attacks, including the killing of a 16 year-old boy and a 59 year-old woman by Israeli settlers. Settler terror, in particular, continued unabated. Threats of deportation have continued against Palestinian civilians, including four elected Palestinian legislators from Jerusalem, who are among the hundreds of Palestinian Jerusalemites whose residency rights have been revoked or that Israel is threatening to revoke.

Demolition of Palestinian homes in East Jerusalem has also continued, with several more homes destroyed and families made homeless and displaced as part of the illegal campaign to empty the city of its indigenous residents. Final approval for the demolition of 22 Palestinian homes in the Al Bustan area of Silwan for the building of a so-called park was also announced during this period. Tens of other demolition orders have also been issued, including for a school, and there are reports of intentions to issue demolition orders for up to 40 buildings, comprising at least 100 homes, in the Issawiya neighbourhood of East Jerusalem.

More than 380 Palestinians were arrested several hundred others detained, especially at checkpoints and including children, adding to the thousands of Palestinian civilians still in Israeli jails and detention centres.

Incitement by Israeli officials and settlers has continued, including threats to launch military assaults in the Occupied Palestinian Territory as well as against other countries in the region, and ongoing threats against ships attempting to break the Gaza blockade, despite the disastrous aftermath of Israel's attack on the Turkish aid ship and its killing of nine civilians. In this regard, we continue to join the calls for a full, independent, credible, international investigation, under the auspices of the Secretary-General, into that Israeli attack.

Despite its claimed commitment to peace, Israel has not ceased these actions — not even for a moment — in violation of its legal obligations and in defiance of international calls for their cessation. This situation has seriously hampered progress in the proximity talks and undermined the credibility of any kind of peace process.

What was set out to be accomplished during the current talks, has thus far not been accomplished. Moreover, everything that has occurred in the meanwhile on the Israeli side has been the stark antithesis of that required for a peaceful settlement in accordance with the two-State solution on the basis of the pre-1967 borders and the parameters that are well known to all of us and firmly internationally supported and endorsed.

The solution for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the core of the Arab-Israeli conflict, is before us and has been for decades. And, yet, the international community once again seems at a loss as to how to act collectively to justly and finally resolve this long-festering conflict. The bold measures that must be

taken to implement the relevant resolutions of this Council, which provide the basis for any just, lasting and comprehensive peace, remain to be taken. Israel's impunity continues to trump the efforts to shore up the necessary political will to take those bold measures needed to promote the resumption of a credible and fair peace process and advance the cause of international peace and security, which this conflict unquestionably directly harms.

What needs to happen for the Security Council to finally rise to its responsibility to bring an end to this brutal military occupation that has denied the Palestinian people their inalienable rights, denied them a life of freedom and dignity in their homeland, and totally destabilized an entire region, making peace and security elusive for millions and millions of people for more than half a century? We have reiterated on numerous occasions that time is of the essence and that its passage is not in favour of the realization of the two-State solution, which continues to be threatened by illegal Israeli attempts to alter the demographic composition, status and character of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and forcibly de facto annex even more Palestinian land, prior to any final settlement being reached.

Faced with this ongoing challenge, it is high time that the international community, with the Security Council and Quartet at the forefront, ceases to appease Israel and genuinely consider the collective actions that must be taken to bring it into compliance with its legal obligations and to salvage the two-State solution and advance the realization thereof within an accelerated time frame.

I reaffirm today that, despite the harsh reality that prevails on all fronts, the Palestinian leadership remains fully committed to peace and to engaging in a credible peace process based on the agreed terms of reference, with the aim of definitively bringing an end to the Israeli occupation in order to allow the Palestinian people to exercise their right to self-determination in their independent State, with East Jerusalem as its capital, living side by side with Israel in peace and security on the basis of the pre-1967 borders, and achieving a just resolution of the plight of the Palestine refugees in accordance with international law and United Nations resolutions.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of Israel.

Ms. Shalev (Israel): Madam President, allow me to commend you for your able stewardship of the Security Council this month. Let me also thank Mr. Lynn Pasco, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, for his informative briefing.

Almost two years ago, I came to New York to represent the Israel that I know and love: a vibrant, democratic State that shares the noble values enumerated in the Charter of the United Nations. That is precisely why I have sat in this Council time and again to declare Israel's commitment to peace. For words are the father of action; declarations of peace are the precursors of peace.

Hence, Israel calls for direct negotiations between us and the Palestinians — no preconditions, no delays. With Jerusalem and Ramallah only 10 minutes apart, direct negotiations are the only path to bridge the existing gaps. In anticipation of such direct talks, our partners and our neighbours have an essential role: to embrace the language of peace and coexistence and to reject one-sided narratives. And so I ask, how many times in this Chamber have our neighbours recognized Israel's right to exist as the homeland for the Jewish people, or condemned Hamas terrorism and violence against Israeli civilians, or spoken out against those who call for us to be wiped off the map? Not once. The silence is deafening.

As we seek a way forward in our region, we applaud the important work of Senator George Mitchell on behalf of United States President Barack Obama. Senator Mitchell works to achieve our shared vision of two States living side by side in peace and security, one Jewish, one Palestinian. Despite this important work and progress towards direct negotiations, there exists a dangerous phenomenon in our region. So-called activists, under the guise of humanitarian aid, support terrorist forces in our region, particularly in the Hamas-controlled Gaza Strip. The organizers of such efforts in Gaza — with the cooperation of Hamas and others who oppose peace — are fully aware of the internationally recognized and unimpeded channels for delivering aid to the Gaza Strip. They are aware of the good offices available to them if they truly desire to assist the people of Gaza. Yet these provocateurs seek nothing but confrontation. They choose violence, escalation and instant media headlines in an effort to delegitimize Israel.

As we just heard from Mr. Pascoe, the phenomenon of flotillas to Gaza is not conducive to efforts to achieve peace in the Middle East. Indeed, in this respect I wish to share with the Council Israel's deep concern regarding new reports of yet another flotilla departing from Lebanon to the Gaza Strip. We call upon the international community to exert its influence on the organizers of this provocative action. We also call on the Government of Lebanon to demonstrate its responsibility to prevent this from happening.

In Lebanon, the terrorist organization Hizbullah continues to build its military infrastructure and embed it into the civilian population. Transfers of sophisticated weapons from Syria and Iran to Hizbullah systematically violate the arms embargo. At the same time, this terrorist group continues to place increasingly sophisticated and deadly weapons within villages, adjacent to schools, hospitals and civilian homes. This is a blatant violation of international law and basic dictates of humanity.

Just as alarming, recent confrontations in southern Lebanon between the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) and so-called Lebanese civilians reflect Hizbullah's efforts to redeploy its forces and further harass and assault the critical work of UNIFIL. These most recent clashes against UNIFIL are a direct violation of resolution 1701 (2006) and a challenge to the members of the Security Council. In this respect, Israel commends the Security Council for meeting on 9 July to address these most recent confrontations. Hizbullah's provocations must not go unanswered by the Council. The Security Council has repeatedly and clearly stipulated that this terrorist organization must disarm and disband.

As we seek a way forward, certain basic principles must emerge. The first is security. Israel's security will never be compromised by us. We must all recognize that since the advent of peace talks, the threats facing Israel have grown more diverse and dangerous: the rockets of Iranian proxies Hamas and Hizbullah, global terrorism and the pursuit of nuclear weapons by Iran.

In direct negotiations, we stand prepared to take political risks for peace. We have taken a major step with respect to Israel's policy towards the closure of Gaza. As we heard from Under-Secretary-General Pascoe, all goods that are not weapons or materiel for warlike purposes are now entering Gaza. Beyond Gaza, we have worked with the Palestinian Authority to build a flourishing economy in the West Bank.

The second principle is that we must look towards a definitive end to the conflict that involves mutual recognition. A request that Israel recognize a Palestinian State as the nation-State of the Palestinian people must be met with an acknowledgement that Israel is the nation-State of the Jewish people. Through such mutual recognition, we can take tangible steps towards promoting coexistence, eliminating incitement and combating terrorism. Through such mutual recognition, courageous decisions can be made for the sake of peace. Through such mutual recognition, we can speak with each other, not past one another or through intermediaries.

Before concluding, my comments today would be incomplete without expressing our ongoing deep concern that Gilad Shalit has remained deprived of his most basic human rights, including any visit from the Red Cross, for more than four years. Israel expects the international community to do all in its power — more than has been done thus far — to bring about the swift release of Gilad Shalit.

Peace is not merely a signed document. It is a set of values that allow us all to live our lives in security and with hope — Israelis and Palestinian alike.

The President: I shall now give the floor to the members of the Council.

Ms. Anderson (United States of America): I would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Pascoe for his briefing.

Israeli and Palestinian leaders have continued to engage in proximity talks, with the help of Special Envoy George Mitchell. The gaps have narrowed, and we believe there are opportunities to narrow them further in direct talks, which we encourage the parties to begin as soon as possible. Special Envoy Mitchell was in the region again this week to continue this process. Based on President Obama's recent meetings in Washington with President Abbas and Prime Minister Netanyahu, we believe that we have an opportunity to make progress towards Middle East peace, which can ultimately be achieved only through direct negotiations, and we urge all concerned to work with us towards this goal.

Only through good-faith negotiations can the parties mutually agree on an outcome that ends the conflict and reconciles the Palestinian goal of an independent and viable State based on the 1967 lines, with agreed swaps, and the Israeli goal of a Jewish State with secure and recognized borders that reflect subsequent developments and meets Israeli security requirements. We should all seek to assist the parties as they make the hard choices necessary for lasting peace and do nothing to hinder them.

The United States has welcomed the new policy towards Gaza announced by the Government of Israel, which responds to the calls of many in the international community. Israel's 5 July announcement of a list of controlled items for Gaza is an important step towards successful implementation of this new policy. With this change, the flow of goods and material into Gaza should significantly improve, along with the access that the people of Gaza have to those items.

We are already seeing progress, with an expansion of both the scope and the quantity of goods entering Gaza through the crossings. We welcome these increases and expect the number of truckloads to continue to rise in the days and weeks ahead. These arrangements should improve conditions for the people in Gaza while preventing the entry of weapons for Hamas. We urge all those wishing to deliver goods to do so through established channels so that their cargo can be inspected and transferred via land crossings into Gaza, to ensure that Israel's legitimate security needs are addressed even as the Palestinians' humanitarian needs are met.

Hamas interference with international assistance and with the work of non-governmental organizations continues to seriously complicate efforts in Gaza. On 28 June, for example, an armed band of masked men attacked and destroyed one of the sites of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) summer games for children in Gaza. This was the second such attack in a month, another craven attempt to impose an extremist viewpoint on Gaza's population.

We commend UNRWA for conducting a programme that promotes human rights and tolerance and that serves as a viable alternative to Hamas camps that promote radicalism and violence. Continued arms smuggling by Hamas and its commitment to terrorism undermine security and prosperity for Palestinians and Israelis alike. And Hamas continues to hold captive the Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit, whom it abducted in 2006. We call again for his immediate release.

In its 1 June statement on the Gaza flotilla incident (S/PRST/2010/9), the Council expressed support for the proximity talks, urged the parties to act with restraint, avoiding any unilateral or provocative actions, and called on all international partners to promote an atmosphere of cooperation between the parties and throughout the region.

We urge the international community to shun unilateral action and confrontation and instead undertake conciliatory steps that promote cooperation between the parties.

We call on all parties to act responsibly to meet the recovery needs of the people of Gaza and to rebuild Gaza's civilian private sector, which will be the engine of Gaza's recovery.

In this context, Israel, like any nation, should be allowed to undertake an investigation into events that involve its national security. Israel is capable of conducting a serious and credible investigation, and the structure and terms of reference of the independent public commission on the Gaza flotilla can meet the standard of a prompt, impartial, credible and transparent investigation. We will prejudge neither the process nor its outcome, and we will await the conduct and findings of the investigation before drawing further conclusions.

The United States has expressed its concern about the reports of Israeli Government actions in Jerusalem, including the demolition of a number of buildings in East Jerusalem. We have urged all parties to avoid actions that could undermine trust, and we continue to oppose unilateral actions that prejudge negotiations on the status of Jerusalem, which, like all other permanent status issues, must be resolved by the parties through negotiations.

Let me conclude by noting our firm and abiding commitment to Lebanon's sovereignty and independence and thus to the full implementation of the Council's resolutions 1559 (2004), 1680 (2006) and 1701 (2006). The United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) is integral not only to the full implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) but also to maintaining calm along the Blue Line. The United States fully supports UNIFIL, and we commend the

active role it plays in ensuring the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006). We call on all parties to preserve UNIFIL's freedom of movement within its area of operations, and we strongly support its mission.

Mr. Takasu (Japan): I too am grateful to Under-Secretary-General Pascoe for his comprehensive briefing. I would also like to thank Ambassador Mansour and Ambassador Shalev for their respective statements.

As all of us agree, the only way to achieve durable peace in the Middle East is through sincere negotiations in good faith between the parties concerned. We support the effort by the United States to pursue proximity talks between the parties with a view to starting direct negotiations. We hope that these efforts will produce progress as early as possible.

The negotiations should achieve a two-State solution by ending the 1967 occupation of territories, including East Jerusalem. Japan supports the plan of the Palestinian Authority to build a Palestinian State within 24 months. Japan will continue to extend assistance and help build capacity for the Palestinian people and institutions for the Palestinian State.

Both parties must carry out their obligations and commitments under the Road Map. We reiterate the call on the Israeli Government to freeze all settlement activities in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. We deplore the recent razing of Palestinian houses in East Jerusalem by the Israeli authorities. Any act that could prejudge the final status negotiations should not be taken.

At the same time, we call upon the Palestinian Authority to continue its efforts to improve security and fulfil its commitment to cease violence and work against incitement. Both sides need to build mutual trust, to move from proximity talks to direct negotiations and to refrain from taking any action that undermines trust, which is essential for such a transition. Neither the parties, nor the peoples, nor the international community can afford to turn away from serious confidence-building efforts.

On Gaza, the announcement by the Israeli Government on easing restrictions on civilian goods in Gaza is a very positive step. We hope that the Israeli authorities will make further efforts to improve the lives of people in Gaza.

We call for the full implementation of resolution 1860 (2009), including preventing illicit trafficking in arms and stopping rockets from being fired into Israel. We support efforts facilitating intra-Palestinian reconciliation.

Regarding the investigation into the Gaza flotilla incident, we support the efforts of the Secretary-General, which we strongly hope will contribute to making the investigation consistent with the principles contained in the presidential statement adopted by the Security Council on 1 June (S/PRST/2010/9).

Japan will make every effort to help the parties achieve a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

Ms. Čolaković (Bosnia and Herzegovina): I would like to begin by thanking Mr. Lynn Pascoe, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, for his update on recent developments in the Middle East.

We also thank the Permanent Representative of Israel, Her Excellency Ms. Gabriela Shalev, and the Permanent Observer of Palestine, His Excellency Mr. Riyad Mansour, for their presence and their contributions to our debate.

Bosnia and Herzegovina remains deeply concerned by the extremely worrying impasse that persists in the peace process in the Middle East. The pattern of events in the region in recent months is a strong reminder that the situation on the ground continues to be a source of great concern. Recent events further demonstrated that the counterproductive and unacceptable blockade of Gaza represents a grave obstacle to security, prosperity and opportunity for the Palestinians and the Israelis, and for all nations in the region.

In this regard, we welcome the Israeli Government's recent announcement, which, once fully and effectively implemented, will be a significant step forward in the review of Israeli policy on Gaza. However, we strongly believe that this is not enough and that more needs to be done. Bosnia and Herzegovina is of the view that only the full implementation of Security Council resolution 1860 (2009) can meet the basic needs of the 1.5 million Palestinian residents in the Gaza Strip. Hence, we reiterate our call upon Israel to allow the immediate, sustained and unconditional opening of the crossings for the flow of humanitarian aid, commercial goods

and persons to and from Gaza, in accordance with resolution 1860 (2009) and the 2005 Agreement on Movement and Access.

Time and again, we have to reiterate that comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East can be achieved only on the basis of the relevant Security Council resolutions, the Madrid principles, the Road Map, the agreements previously reached by the parties and the Arab Peace Initiative. Bosnia and Herzegovina is and will remain committed to the two-State solution, with the State of Israel and an independent, democratic, contiguous and viable State of Palestine living side by side in peace and security.

In order to overcome the current peace process impasse, the parties have to fulfil their obligations and make a tangible contribution towards creating conditions conducive to negotiations. Settlements, the separation barrier built on occupied land, the demolition of homes and evictions are illegal under international law and contrary to Israel's obligations under the Road Map. We believe that these activities constitute a major obstacle on the road to comprehensive peace because they prejudge the outcome of final status negotiations and threaten to make a two-State solution impossible. It is therefore essential that Israel put an end to all settlement activities, including natural growth, in East Jerusalem and the rest of the West Bank, and dismantle all outposts erected since March 2001.

Our concerns also include the latest developments in East Jerusalem and continuing tensions in the city. Bosnia and Herzegovina does not recognize the annexation of East Jerusalem and underlines that the status of Jerusalem is a permanent status issue that must be resolved through negotiations between the parties. Jerusalem — the holy city of the three great monotheistic religions: Christianity, Judaism and Islam — should be the symbol of peace, freedom of religious expression and human rights.

Israel's security concerns, including a complete stop to all violence and arms smuggling into Gaza, must also be addressed. Bosnia and Herzegovina condemns the latest attack on the children's recreational facility in Gaza. We call upon Hamas to unconditionally allow the International Committee of the Red Cross access and to end its interference with the operations of non-governmental organizations and United Nations agencies in Gaza.

Regarding the recent tragic incident involving the humanitarian aid flotilla, we reiterate our call for a prompt, impartial, credible and transparent investigation conforming to international standards, in accordance with the statement of the President of the Security Council S/PRST/2010/9. At the same time, we support Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's proposal for an international inquiry to investigate the Gaza flotilla incident.

Before concluding, allow me, once again to emphasize that only direct negotiations between the Israelis and the Palestinians can bring about a lasting resolution to the conflict and ensure peace, stability and progress in the Middle East.

Ms. Ziade (Lebanon) (*spoke in Arabic*): At the outset, I should like to thank Mr. Lynn Pascoe for his comprehensive briefing.

Israel's raid on the freedom flotilla carrying humanitarian supplies to besieged Gaza on 31 May 2010 still occupies the forefront of our Organization's attention. That aggression constituted a flagrant violation of international law, international humanitarian law and the law of the sea. We reiterate that the aggression, which took place in international waters, was an act of piracy, and we agree with the statement issued by the Secretariat that the tragedy could have been avoided had Israel responded to the repeated appeals of the international community to end its blockade. Indeed, there will be no need for humanitarian aid ships to Gaza when Israel lifts its blockade of Gaza and opens the crossings.

In this connection, we would like to state the following. First, we emphasize the need for the Secretary-General to launch an urgent investigation into the actions of the Israeli navy against the freedom flotilla. It should be marked by impartiality, credibility and transparency. As emphasized in the presidential statement of 1 June 2010(S/PRST/2010/9), it should conform to international standards with a view to identifying responsibility, punishing the perpetrators of these crimes and ensuring compensation for the victims. It is unacceptable that impunity should continue in this manner.

Secondly, we stress our rejection of the unilateral Israeli investigation, which is neither credible, impartial nor transparent and does not conform to requisite international standards. Israel is the aggressor. It determined the outcome of the investigation before it

started. It invoked the right of self-defence to justify its attack on defenceless civilians. In this connection, we reiterate our demand for the lifting of the blockade imposed by Israel on the Gaza Strip, which violates international norms and laws, including the Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949, which enshrines the protection of civilians in time of war.

The partial closing of the border crossings to Gaza impedes freedom of movement and the delivery of humanitarian assistance and necessary commodities such as food, medicine and fuel. The blockade constitutes collective punishment of more than 1.5 million Palestinians in Gaza. This tragedy must unconditionally come to an end.

Once again, we condemn Israeli settlement policy, which coincides with a rabid campaign to demolish Palestinian homes and evict the Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem. The policy is aimed at disrupting the geographic contiguity of the Palestinian territory and thwarting the two-State solution. We would like to stress the need to follow up on the updates of the Goldstone report (A/HRC/12/48) transmitted by the Secretary-General to our Council.

We call on Israel to report on the implementation of General Assembly resolution 64/10 of 5 November 2009, in emulation of the actions taken by Switzerland and Palestine. Israel has intentionally hampered the peace process, as proven by its lack of response to United States efforts and refusal to freeze settlement activities in East Jerusalem and the other occupied territories at a time when the Arab States are making their best efforts to facilitate the resumption of negotiations, which, we emphasize, must address the issue of a final settlement within a specified timeframe. The negotiations must not merely be a confidence-building measure.

With regard to the occupied Syrian Golan, we stress once again the need to implement resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). Israel must withdraw to the line of 4 June 1967. We stress that any action taken by Israel to transform the legal, physical or demographic status of the occupied Syrian Golan, including the expansion and building of settlements, is null and void.

On the actions undertaken in southern Lebanon early this month, I note that the Lebanese Council of Ministers held a meeting on 8 July and issued a statement recalling its firm support for maintaining the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) and the close and inextricable link between UNIFIL and Lebanese citizens — yes, Lebanese citizens — for decades. It emphasized the important role of UNIFIL under resolution 1701 (2006) and the need to implement all provisions of that resolution. I wonder whether Israel complies with the provisions of resolution 1701 (2006). Has Israel ceased violating Lebanese sovereignty by air, land and sea? Has Israel withdrawn from the northern part of Al-Ghajar and the surrounding area? We therefore call upon the international community to put an end, once and for all, to all Israeli violations of Lebanese sovereignty.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank Mr. Pascoe for his substantive briefing. The situation in the Middle East remains unstable and very fragile, although with some positive aspects, above all the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian proximity talks mediated by Senator Mitchell. An opportunity remains for the resumption of direct talks between the sides, and we cannot let it slip away. In this connection, reports from Israel about plans for new construction in East Jerusalem and on recent demolitions of a number of Arab homes are a source of great concern.

Moscow continues to consider unacceptable any unilateral action that could prejudice the outcome of an Israeli-Palestinian settlement. We call on the Israeli side to show restraint in accordance with the united position of the international community on these issues, given the particular sensitivity of the problem of Jerusalem, whose fate should be decided through negotiations on the final status of the Palestinian territories. It is evident that, if they are to move from proximity talks to a substantive exchange of views on the key issues on the bilateral agenda, the sides must refrain from decisions and actions that could undermine efforts to build an atmosphere of trust between them.

The Middle East Quartet remains the primary instrument supporting the peace process, and the recent trip to the region by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Sergey Lavrov, should be seen in that context. The Special Representatives of the Quartet continue their intense daily work, including on the ground, to achieve the objectives set by Quartet leaders at their most recent meeting in Moscow with a view to moving towards a comprehensive Middle East settlement.

We note some movement in the situation involving Gaza. Easing the embargo is a step in the right direction which we are convinced should be followed by further measures, such as restoring the conditions that existed at the conclusion of the 2005 Agreement on Movement and Access, when representatives of the European Union and the lawful Palestinian authorities were stationed at Gaza border crossings. The ultimate goal of the international community should, of course, be the complete lifting of the blockade, while ensuring Israel's security interests.

We await additional information from the United Nations and Israel on the status of the investigation of the circumstances relating to the incident of the freedom flotilla to Gaza.

Unfortunately, one serious remaining issue is that of intra-Palestinian unity. We are conducting principled activity at all levels to support efforts to overcome differences within the Palestinian ranks. We appeal to and are seeking to convince Hamas to align itself with the platform of the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Arab Peace Initiative, in favour of which the Quartet has repeatedly spoken out. There has been some movement in Hamas' position in this direction, and we will pursue our relevant work with that organization.

In conclusion, I again reaffirm Russia's readiness, within international forums and bilateral frameworks, to continue its efforts to contribute to a comprehensive and just settlement in the Middle East, a crucial element of which would be to resolve the Palestine question on a two-State basis that provides for the existence of an independent and viable Palestinian State living side by side with Israel in peace and security. There is no other option.

Mr. Heller (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Under-Secretary-General Lynn Pascoe for his briefing on the situation in the Middle East. I also thank the Permanent Representative of Israel and the Permanent Observer of Palestine for their statements.

The events that have taken place in recent weeks confirm once again that the international community, and the Security Council in particular, must continue to monitor the situation in the Middle East and encourage intensified negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority, based on previous agreements and obligations and ongoing diplomatic efforts. That has been particularly evident following the attack on the freedom flotilla that took place in international waters on 31 May, with tragic and disturbing consequences, not only because of the clearly reprehensible facts, but also because it has yet again highlighted the fragility of the humanitarian situation in Gaza.

The presidential statement adopted by the Security Council on 1 June (S/PRST/2010/9), which called for a prompt, impartial, credible and transparent investigation of those events in accordance with international standards, remains valid. Mexico believes that the parties involved have not only the right to establish their own commissions of inquiry, but also the obligation to do so in matters that concern them.

In that regard, we note the results of the internal inquiry commission established by Israel, which were made known on 12 July. We continue to await the results of the independent public committee for more in-depth conclusions.

That not withstanding, such internal commissions cannot replace the establishment of an international commission as outlined in the Council's presidential statement; rather, they must complement it. Only thus can we create the cooperation and trust that are needed to ensure that a credible outcome of the investigations that is acceptable to the parties concerned. Hence, we encourage the Secretary-General to continue his efforts to establish a body that would meet those criteria.

At the same time, it is essential also to prevent all acts of provocation that could give rise to another incident like the one that occurred on 31 May. In that regard, any delivery of humanitarian assistance must be arranged through established channels.

We believe that the Gaza blockade is unsustainable and counterproductive, and that it has severe humanitarian consequences for the civilian population of the Strip; at the same time, we welcome Egypt's decision to partially lift the blockade and Israel's decision to permit access to Gaza for more goods, limiting only material that could affect its security. We recognize the important work in that regard of the Quartet and its Representative and that of representatives of the United Nations system.

While this progress is positive, the lifting of the blockade must be complete. As we have been saying since January 2009, and taking account of Israel's legitimate security concerns, we believe that this security can be achieved only if it is accompanied by

the establishment of an international monitoring mechanism to guarantee a lasting ceasefire, the complete opening of border crossings and control of illicit trafficking in arms to Gaza, in accordance with Security Council resolution 1860 (2009).

We also underscore the importance of carrying out the intra-Palestinian reconciliation process, which is taking place with the support of Egypt. This is essential for the building of a future Palestinian State.

Frank and direct dialogue is the only way to achieve a comprehensive, lasting resolution of the Middle East conflict that recognizes Israel's right to exist and makes possible the establishment of a politically and economically viable Palestinian State, living in peace with Israel within secure and internationally recognized borders, in accordance with Security Council resolutions, the Road Map, the Madrid principles and the Arab Peace Initiative.

We therefore support the holding of so-called proximity talks, so long as they lead to the resumption of direct negotiations within a reasonable time. We must understand that the window of opportunity that opened when the proximity talks began could close if significant progress is not made. We therefore encourage both parties to make every possible effort aimed at an agreed resumption of direct negotiations. Thus, it is essential for both Israel and the Palestinian Authority to comply with the principles set out in the Road Map, which are the basis for resolving all pending issues in this conflict.

Similarly, both parties must avoid actions that run counter to international law and international humanitarian law, as well as any provocative statement or act of violence that could exacerbate tension. In that regard, the demolitions in East Jerusalem and the building of new settlements are to be condemned. Such practices in an occupied territory run counter to international law and violate the provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention. We reaffirm that all such practices, including the expansion of settlements in the West Bank and in East Jerusalem by so-called natural growth, are a further serious obstacle to the peace process. We urge Israel to cease such practices.

We commend the Palestinian Authority's efforts to meet its commitments with respect to security and economic development in the West Bank. We have taken note of the positive economic and human impact of Israel's initiative to partially lift restrictions imposed on the movement of people and goods in the West Bank. We hope that these steps will be permanent and will lead to the complete and irreversible dismantling of all checkpoints, which is indispensable for the establishment of a viable and independent Palestinian State.

We are convinced that improvement in the living conditions of the Palestinian people and effective security controls in the West Bank are essential for the achievement of lasting peace in the Middle East. We therefore support Prime Minister Fayyad's plan to lay the economic and institutional foundations of a future Palestinian State; we call upon the Quartet and the international community to continue their active support for those efforts.

Peace in the Middle East requires progress on the various tracks of the conflict in the region. Thus, we are concerned at continued violations of the provisions of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006), in particular daily raids by the Israel Defense Forces in Lebanon's territorial space and the discovery of weapons and explosives in the area of operation of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). We are concerned also by recent acts of violence — presumably organized — against UNIFIL personnel. We must guarantee their safety and freedom of movement in their area of operation and must ensure coordination at the highest level between the Lebanese Armed Forces and Government and UNIFIL in order to avoid incidents like those that took place on 3 July. We appeal to both Israel and Lebanon, and to all other actors involved, to comply with the provisions of the relevant Security Council resolutions and to avoid all hostile rhetoric that could lead to an escalation of violence. It is essential to strengthen Lebanon's sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence.

Finally, we consider that Israel and Syria must resume a process of rapprochement as soon as possible, through modalities acceptable to both parties, in order to find a solution on the occupied Golan that will preserve the sovereignty and protect the interests of both States.

Mrs. Viotti (Brazil): I welcome the holding of this open debate on the situation in the Middle East. I thank Under-Secretary-General Lynn Pascoe for his briefing and Ambassadors Gabriela Shalev and Riyad Mansour for their remarks.

As we meet for another quarterly open debate on the Middle East, my delegation can see some improvement in the situation on the ground — but, unfortunately, much less than we all wished for. It is disappointing to be forced to recognize that the region remains tense and that a solution continues to prove elusive.

Making substantial progress on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is perhaps the single most important pending business in the Security Council today, a conflict whose resolution would surely have a positive effect in many areas. In the long term, the status quo is in the interest of no one. Rather, it feeds extremism, fosters disillusionment and discredits diplomacy.

We therefore reiterate our support for the mediation efforts by the United States Administration through the proximity talks and hope that these can lead to direct negotiations. But we should have no illusions: if no real progress is made in the coming weeks, the situation on the ground is not likely to improve in a sustainable manner. On the contrary, the fragile support obtained, on both sides, for engaging in indirect negotiations may be gravely eroded. This process is approaching a point where it must yield results.

When direct talks resume, the international community will have to sustain its involvement throughout the process, as history shows that progress requires strong external incentives. In this context, Brazil reiterates its support for the holding of a comprehensive international conference on the Middle East, once conditions are appropriate. Further engagement by relevant players from outside the region might prove beneficial.

An independent, democratic and viable Palestinian State, living side by side with Israel in peace and security within internationally recognized borders, remains the only solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict and for the long-term stability of the entire region and the world.

On 1 June 2010, the Security Council called for a "prompt, impartial, credible and transparent investigation conforming to international standards" (S/PRST/2010/9) into the Israeli action against a Gaza-bound humanitarian flotilla.

We took due note of the Israel's decision to establish an inquiry panel, with two respectable foreigners as observers. That is a positive step. However, the panel does not meet the requirements set forth by the Security Council. In our view, the gravity of the incident and the facts that the attack has taken place in international waters and that it involves entities and individuals from various countries require that the investigation be conducted under the auspices of the United Nations. We therefore urge the Secretary-General to continue consultations on an arrangement that fulfils the requirements by the Council.

The tragic loss of life and injuries to civilians as a result of that action showed once again that the blockade of Gaza is politically unsustainable. That was clearly recognized by the Security Council in the presidential statement of last June. We therefore welcome the Israeli decision to expand the list of goods allowed to be brought into Gaza, including building materials for projects sponsored by the international community. That is particularly welcome, as it will speed up the long-overdue reconstruction of the Strip.

In this regard, I am pleased to inform the Council that yesterday President Lula signed into law a bill by which Brazil will donate 25 million reais — around $15 million — to the Palestine Authority, in principle through the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), for projects to support Gaza's reconstruction and development.

Also positive is Israel's decision to improve the capacity at the Kerem Shalom crossing and to extend its hours of operation.

However, those measures are still insufficient. Israel must find ways to reconcile legitimate security concerns with the normalization of life in the Strip. An immediate and sustained opening of crossings is imperative. The resumption of regular exports from Gaza is urgently needed as a way to revive an economy that has been crippled by the blockade. The population of Gaza must not be forced to keep surviving on international charity.

A lasting solution to the crisis in Gaza can create a new logic of peace that might not only strengthen those forces in Palestine that favour moderation and national reconciliation, but also pave the way for a strong revival of the peace process altogether. The continuation of the blockade, on the other hand, might aggravate the Palestinian schism and impair a future viable Palestinian state.

Israeli policies that prejudge the result of negotiations and forcefully change the demographics of the West Bank and East Jerusalem make it more difficult for negotiations to be resumed. We reiterate the need for a permanent cessation of all settlement activity. On their part, Palestinians must overcome their longstanding divisions, keep extremists in check, including in Gaza, completely halt the launching of rockets against Israel and enhance democratic governance. In this context, we welcome and support the efforts of Prime Minister Salam Fayyad to implement his two-year statehood programme.

We must continue to avoid the return of the conflict between Lebanon and Israel. All parties must therefore faithfully implement their obligations under resolution 1701 (2006). We also urge the international community to assist Lebanon in building up its state capacity, in particular its armed forces, and facilitating the central Government to exercise its authority throughout the country.

Mr. Onanga Ndiaye (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I would like to thank Under-Secretary-General Pascoe for the clear briefing he has just given us. I would also like to join Council members who have spoken before me in expressing my thanks for the information provided by the ambassadors of Palestine and Israel.

My delegation would like to reiterate our concern at the lack of progress made since our most recent debate on this issue (6340th meeting). It quite rightly shows how urgently we need to close the gap between Palestinians and Israelis, as we approach the end of the freeze on new Israeli settlements.

My delegation would like to welcome the international community's inspired new dynamic, in particular the recent initiatives of the United States, Egypt, Morocco, the Quartet and the United Nations, aimed at promoting the resumption of direct talks between the parties in accordance with their obligations and the provisions of the Road Map.

I therefore welcome the regional meeting for Africa organized by the United Nations on 1 and 2 July 2010 in Rabat on strengthening African support for a just and lasting solution to the question of Jerusalem. It was reaffirmed at the end of the meeting that the only solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict lies in an agreement negotiated between the parties and that only a two-State solution, with an independent and viable Palestinian State living side by side in peace and security with Israel and its other neighbours, can bring peace to the region.

As recalled by the Secretary-General, the situation in the Middle East will remain tense if we do not arrive at a comprehensive settlement that takes all aspects of the problem into account. My delegation believes that it is important to find solutions to Israel's security concerns as well as to the question of West Bank settlements, border demarcation between the two States in accordance with resolution 242 (1967) and the Fourth Geneva Convention, the status of Jerusalem and respect for human rights and for the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination.

A political solution in the Middle East will also be found by resolving the security situation, as advocated by the Quartet in its statement of 21 June. However, security must be a reality for both sides. Thus, while for the Government of Israel security is synonymous with the end of arms smuggling, for the Palestinian Authority it means respect for the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people.

Moreover, Gabon welcomes the recent efforts by the Israeli Government aimed at adjusting its policy towards Gaza, in particular by allowing the entry of additional goods such as building materials, thus enabling the United Nations and the international community to continue to provide aid to the people of Gaza.

We also welcome the review now underway of the plan for the administration of Judea and Samaria, in particular measures aimed at employment and the free circulation of goods and persons. However, we favour a complete lifting of restrictions, including at the border crossings. We also call for the freeing by the parties of all political prisoners, including Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit.

With regard to East Jerusalem, my delegation expresses its regret at the destruction of Palestinian families' property on 13 July in certain districts. We deplore this unilateral and provocative act, which is a violation of international law and undermines efforts aimed at resuming negotiations and strengthening mutual confidence.

Moreover, we remain fully committed to finding a solution through peaceful and constructive negotiations that will integrate the legal, religious,

social and environmental aspects of East Jerusalem. We believe that the negotiations should be guided by the borders indicated in the resolutions of 1967 and by the Fourth Geneva Convention.

Several members of the Council have often rightly held that, while we must not neglect the symptoms of the disease, we should focus on its root causes of the disease itself. My country thus remains convinced that it is urgent to intensify negotiations in order not only to make direct contact possible but also to reach a lasting peace, which, let me recall, involves creating a viable Palestinian State. We therefore urge the parties to show restraint and avoid any unilateral action and any provocation. We again invite international partners to promote a climate of trust between the parties and throughout the region.

Sir Mark Lyall Grant (United Kingdom): I thank Mr. Pascoe for his briefing this morning, and I thank the Palestinian and Israeli representatives for their remarks.

Peace in the Middle East is a high priority for the United Kingdom. With every month that a sustainable solution eludes us, the situation in Israel and Palestine becomes more of a catalyst for resentment, violence and extremism. So it is in the interests of this Council, with its responsibility for international peace and security, and of the rest of the international community, to encourage direct negotiations between the parties, leading to a lasting peace.

The expiry of the Israeli settlement moratorium, and Arab League support for proximity talks in September, highlight the urgent need for progress towards a two-State solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The only long-term solution is a secure and universally recognized Israel living alongside a sovereign and viable Palestinian State, with Jerusalem the capital of both States, and a fair settlement for refugees.

We continue to strongly support the United States efforts on proximity talks. It is imperative that the negotiations focus on resolving the final status issues. We encourage the parties to move to direct negotiations as soon as possible. Both sides must avoid actions that undermine the peace process. For Israel, this means extending the settlement moratorium indefinitely and ensuring that it also applies in occupied East Jerusalem. The recent issuing of permits for the construction of 32 new housing units in Pisgat Ze'ev and the demolition of three East Jerusalem homes are exactly the kind of provocative acts that must be avoided. We continue to call for a complete cessation of all settlement activity in both the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Settlements are illegal under international law and must stop.

For their part, the Palestinians and the Arab States must not back away from their responsibility to seize the opportunity presented by the efforts of the United States Government. The Palestinian leadership must be prepared to make bold decisions in the interests of its people, and it must have the support it needs from Arab States to see negotiations through to a sustainable conclusion. There must be a complete halt to rocket attacks into southern Israel, and Hamas and other militant groups should renounce violence once and for all. As Mr. Pascoe has said, Hamas attacks on United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) children's summer camps in Gaza are particularly deplorable.

Turning to the Gaza flotilla incident of 31 May, I reiterate our deep regret at the loss of life involved. Accountability is important. We welcome the efforts of the Secretary-General towards that goal. The Israeli independent public commission should proceed swiftly, transparently and rigorously, with access to all the evidence available. We will be better able to draw further conclusions once the conduct of the inquiry becomes clearer.

This incident and the threat of further flotillas highlight what we all know: that the situation in Gaza is unsustainable. Together with the European Union and the Quartet, we have called on Israel to ease restrictions on access and enable a return to economic normality. Israel's recent decision to move from a list of 120 permitted goods to a list of specific prohibited items is a welcome development. It shows that it is possible to lift the pressure on ordinary Gazans without compromising the security of ordinary Israelis. But we need to see this translated into real change on the ground. That will mean building capacity at the crossings, getting vital reconstruction projects up and running and ensuring that Gazans can export as well as import goods. The United Kingdom stands ready to support this.

We continue to call for the immediate release of Gilad Shalit, who has been held hostage in Gaza since June 2006. It is unacceptable that four years on he

should still be held by Hamas, in denial of the most basic of human rights.

A solution to the Arab-Israeli conflict is in all our interests. We want the new generation of Palestinians to grow up in hope, not despair, believing in a peaceful settlement with Israel, and not impoverished and susceptible to terrorist recruitment. We want the next generation of Israelis to live free from the fear of rocket fire, and to be able to enjoy peaceful relations with their Arab neighbours. The international community has a responsibility to help deliver that goal.

Mr. Mayr-Harting (Austria): Let me first join others in thanking Under-Secretary-General Lynn Pascoe for his update this morning on recent developments in the Middle East. We also thank the Permanent Representative of Israel and the Permanent Observer of Palestine for their presence here today and their contributions to our debate.

Austria aligns itself with the statement to be delivered by the European Union delegation on behalf of the European Union later in our debate today.

We are close to the end of the ten-month partial moratorium on settlements that the Israeli Government committed to. The four-month deadline for the proximity talks, after which the Arab League wished to evaluate results, is also rapidly approaching. The coming weeks will therefore be crucial for achieving progress in the peace efforts for the Middle East. These efforts must lay the foundation for a sustainable negotiating process; otherwise they will add to the long list of missed opportunities and play into the hands of peace opponents. Quartet members are fully committed to helping the parties get back to the negotiating table. We appreciate the extraordinary efforts undertaken by the United States Special Envoy, Senator Mitchell, to identify common ground for starting a process towards the implementation of a two-State solution.

Austria calls on both parties to honour the obligations they agreed to under the Road Map, and to refrain from any policies that may undermine the spirit of negotiation in good faith. Israeli settlement activities in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, the demolition of houses and the continued building of the separation barrier on Palestinian land continue to constitute major obstacles to peace. In this context, we, like others, wish to express our grave concern about the recent demolition of homes in various neighbourhoods of East Jerusalem, as well as about decisions on renewed, continued settlement construction.

Trust in a peace process will depend on visible and tangible changes on the ground. Austria has consistently acknowledged Israel's right to protect its citizens against indiscriminate attacks emanating from Gaza. We repeat our call for an immediate end to all such attacks. At the same time, we continue to believe that security concerns cannot justify the blockade of Gaza. That blockade is unacceptable, unsustainable and counterproductive. We therefore welcome Israel's willingness to review its policies regarding imports to the Gaza Strip. We are convinced that the prospect of reconstruction, new job opportunities and increased freedom of movement can contribute to a positive shift of attitudes, and reverse the current worrying trend of de-development, as asserted by United Nations experts.

We welcome Israel's decision to allow, as a first step, imports of building materials for United Nations-supervised projects. These measures go in the right direction. At the same time, they still fall short of the fundamental change of policy leading to a durable resolution to the situation in Gaza that European Union Foreign Ministers called for in their latest European Union Council conclusions.

We strongly encourage Israel to allow for large-scale reconstruction, to create conditions for a full resumption of productive activities, to allow for exports of agricultural produce and industrial goods as soon as production can recommence and, most important, to grant freedom of movement to the civilian population living in then Gaza Strip.

Austria is deeply disturbed by recent attacks against non-governmental organizations and international organizations in Gaza, including, as others have already mentioned, the vandalizing of a summer games facility for children of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East. Hamas, as the de facto authority in Gaza, bears the responsibility to ensure the safety and unhindered operations of the United Nations and civil society.

Regarding the follow-up to the Security Council's presidential statement of 1 June concerning the military operations against the Gaza flotilla (S/PRST/2010/9), we wish to reiterate the importance of a prompt, impartial, credible and transparent investigation conforming to international standards, so as to clarify

all facts. We therefore support the ongoing efforts of the Secretary-General and call on Israel to positively react to his proposal for an international inquiry.

Austria welcomes the continuing trend of increased stability and economic growth in the West Bank, in particular as it seems that this is due not only to foreign aid but also to improved overall security and a number of successful reform efforts by the Palestinian Authority. Nonetheless, last month's decision to postpone municipal elections was a painful setback in the Palestinian Authority's efforts to build the institutions of a future State. We call on Palestinian political representatives to seriously pursue reconciliation efforts and to agree on a political platform based on the Quartet principles and the quest for peace, democracy and the rule of law. The current split between the West Bank and the Gaza Strip jeopardizes prospects for the successful implementation of a two-State solution.

Mr. Apakan (Turkey): I should like to begin by thanking Under-Secretary-General Pascoe for his comprehensive briefing. We fully appreciate and support the efforts of the Secretary-General and United Nations officials on the ground.

We are currently at the halfway point in terms of the anticipated duration of the proximity talks before proceeding into the envisaged direct negotiations. We fully support this process and the efforts of the United States. Nevertheless, we have hardly seen any breakthroughs, as the Israeli side has not given up its current approach. During recent weeks, Israel has continued active settlement construction and announced comprehensive future projects in the occupied territories. The evidence suggests that Israeli settlement expansion has actually increased since Israel declared its moratorium on building.

Israel has also continued to implement its policies on Palestinian home demolitions and evictions. Last week, the Israelis destroyed at least six Palestinian buildings in East Jerusalem. The Israeli Jerusalem municipality is also preparing for the demolition of up to 100,000 units in East Jerusalem, starting next month. Israel has not stopped its policy of stripping the residency rights of Palestinians living in Jerusalem either. Among the victims were four elected members of the Palestinian Legislative Council.

These policies are not at all compatible with the understanding of permanent peace, nor do they make any contribution to building confidence between the parties: they simply obstruct the peace process. By now, it should have been realized that Israel has nothing to gain through pursuing such policies. Undermining peace efforts and trying to prejudice the outcome of the negotiations only harm its interests, its standing in the international community and its prospects for the future. In particular, Israel's policies aimed at changing the status and fabric of Jerusalem are deplorable and have far-reaching ramifications.

Israel has made some improvements in terms of the goods and material allowed to enter Gaza. However, this has not changed the fact that the blockade imposed on Gaza is still in place. The blockade continues. So does the suffering of the Palestinian people in Gaza, as they are not allowed to engage in normal economic activity, exporting their products, importing necessary materials and moving freely. Eighty per cent of the Palestinians living in Gaza continue to rely on the support of international aid organizations. Sixty-five per cent of the population is living below the poverty line, with an unemployment rate of 34 per cent.

We welcome the increasing international awareness and sensitivity regarding the suffering of the Palestinians in Gaza. The blockade imposed on Gaza is a means of collective punishment. It is unacceptable and immoral, and it poisons the region. The ordeal of the Palestinians in Gaza will end only when the blockade is completely lifted, as stipulated by resolution 1860 (2009).

On 31 May 2010, Israeli military forces attacked a civilian humanitarian convoy in international waters, killing nine civilians. In accordance with the presidential statement adopted by the Security Council on 1 June (S/PRST/2010/9), which called for a prompt, impartial, credible and transparent investigation conforming to international standards, the Secretary-General officially proposed an international panel of investigation. We accepted the proposal of the Secretary-General, and we continue to support the Secretary-General in his efforts to establish a panel of investigation. We hope that he will succeed in establishing an independent and impartial panel of inquiry shortly, as he anticipates.

Mr. Araud (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank the Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, Mr. Pascoe, for his briefing. I also thank the Permanent

Representative of the State of Israel and the Permanent Observer of Palestine for their statements.

I should like to address four points, starting with the issue of Gaza, which has been front-page news due to the flotilla episode. France condemned the disproportionate use of force. We would like to see the full implementation of the presidential statement of 1 June 2010 (S/PRST/2010/9), in which the Security Council called for a prompt, impartial, credible and transparent investigation conforming to international standards. We hope that the efforts of the parties concerned, especially Turkey, the State of Israel and the Secretary-General, will make it possible for this objective to be met.

Furthermore, the flotilla episode brought to the fore what we have been saying for some time in this forum: the blockade of the Gaza Strip is not only unacceptable, but also counterproductive. We welcome the decision of the Governments responsible for this policy to reconsider it. In particular, the announcement by the Government of Israel of measures easing the restrictions is welcome, and we hope that it will be fully implemented. We believe that it would be timely to go even further, with the aim of improving the lives of the civilian population and making economic recovery possible in Gaza. I am thinking specifically of such steps as increasing the capacity of crossings, resuming exports and liberalizing the conditions governing the movement of persons to and from the Gaza Strip.

The European Union is following the situation very closely, as shown by the visit at the beginning of this week by High Representative Ashton. The ministers for foreign affairs of the European Union also expressed their willingness for the Union to contribute to a mechanism allowing for the full implementation of resolution 1860 (2009).

I also note the need for the immediate cessation of all violence, in particular rocket attacks on southern Israel. We further call for the unconditional and immediate liberation of Gilad Shalit, an issue that is being followed very closely in my country.

The flotilla incident also demonstrated the need to reintegrate the territory of Gaza into the peace process. To that end, one of our highest priorities should be to encourage the current mediation efforts in favour of inter-Palestinian reconciliation.

My second point is that we must not lose sight of the fact that the main objective remains the immediate relaunching of the peace process. There is no alternative to the resumption of negotiations towards the creation of a viable and contiguous Palestinian State living in peace side by side with Israel within secure and recognized borders on the basis of Security Council resolutions and the Arab Peace Initiative. That is also the position of the European Union, as will be indicated by the acting head of its delegation in his statement, with which France associates itself.

The international community must commit itself to assisting negotiations and to guaranteeing the parameters of a final agreement that would enable the parties to re-engage in dialogue. We are working very closely with United States and Egyptian authorities to define the terms of an international framework that would allow the negotiations to resume.

My third point is that changes are necessary on the ground to create conditions favourable to the resumption of negotiations. The situation in Jerusalem remains concerning. We therefore deplore the recent demolition of homes in Arab neighbourhoods of the city. Like the destruction of Palestinian houses, settlement activities in East Jerusalem are unacceptable and provocative. There can be no peace that excludes Jerusalem, which, as the President of the French Republic said in his address to the Knesset on 23 June 2008, is likely to become the capital of two States.

Settlements throughout the Palestinian territories remain a major obstacle to a solution. The decision of the Government of Israel to announce a 10-month moratorium on new construction and building permits in the West Bank was a step in the right direction that should be fully implemented. No peace will be possible without the complete cessation of the illegal construction of settlements. As noted by the President of France, settlements complicate the establishment of a Palestinian State and thus do not contribute to Israel's security; on the contrary, they increase the dangers.

The implementation by the Israeli authorities of confidence-building measures on the ground would be likely to promote the rapid resumption of the direct talks that we all hope to see. For instance, prisoners could be released, Zones A and B could be extended, and restrictions on access and movement in the West Bank could continue to be lifted. The Palestinian Authority, for its part, must pursue its efforts to

strengthen the security sector and establish the rule of law. The merciless struggle against terrorism must remain a priority.

My fourth and last point is that the international community must provide strong support for the Palestinian Authority and President Abbas in consolidating the institutions of the future Palestinian State. The challenge is also for Israel to assist more resolutely in that process, particularly in the West Bank. Gestures have been made on the ground, but they are insufficient. The Palestinians must be able to see that developments on the ground will lead to the end of the occupation, in particular in terms of freedom of access and movement.

In this regard, we reiterate our support for Palestinian Prime Minister Fayyad's plan, pursuant to the Paris Conference of December 2007, to create a Palestinian State within a fixed period of time. In order to maintain the momentum of international support created by the Conference, on 1 July French Minister for Foreign Affairs Bernard Kouchner held another follow-up meeting with the co-Presidents in the presence of Prime Minister Fayyad and Egyptian Minister for Foreign Affairs Ahmed Aboul Gheit.

I reiterate that our prime objective is the urgent resumption of negotiations, not only on issues of concern to Israelis and Palestinians, but also other, regional aspects of the peace process. Accordingly, we are working to establish conditions for the resumption of talks between Israel and Syria. We are also pursuing our efforts in Lebanon and call on the parties to implement resolution 1701 (2006), which would guarantee peace between the two countries. In this context, we reaffirm the crucial role played by the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon. The Force must be able to discharge its mandate with the full cooperation of the parties.

The international community and this Council have a major role to play because the situation in the Middle East concerns all of us. France is ready to play its full part in that effort. To that end, the President of France has called for a peace summit, organized in cooperation with all concerned actors, to support United States efforts and assist in the resumption of talks between the two parties.

Mr. Rugunda (Uganda): I thank Mr. Lynn Pascoe, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, for his comprehensive briefing. I also thank the observer of Palestine and the representative of Israel for their statements.

It is a matter of concern to my delegation that the situation in the Middle East remains fragile and tense. It is regrettable that, despite the international and regional efforts to relaunch direct negotiations between Israel and Palestine, no tangible progress has been achieved. We commend, however, the efforts of the United States Administration and the Quartet.

We encourage Israel and Palestine to take practical steps to start direct negotiations. It is in doing so that a comprehensive and lasting peace, based on the vision of two democratic States — Israel and Palestine — living side by side in peace and security, can be realized. Ultimately, lasting peace in the Middle East will be achieved through the efforts and agreement of both parties.

We commend the continued efforts of the Palestinians to fulfil their obligations under the Road Map, particularly in the security sector, State-building and economic development. We are concerned, however, about divisions among the Palestinian groups, and call on the Palestinians to overcome their differences and forge unity.

Israel's continued settlement activity in East Jerusalem is a matter of serious concern. We call on Israel to freeze all settlement activity, including natural growth. We are further concerned about recent incidents in which additional home demolition orders have been issued in East Jerusalem.

On Gaza, we are concerned about the grave humanitarian situation caused by the blockade. We welcome the recent efforts of Israel to ease the blockade, which have facilitated the onset of a number of United Nations projects and allowed more goods into Gaza. However, this is not enough. We call on Israel to fully open the borders and lift the blockade.

Concerning the flotilla incident, we support an impartial, credible and transparent investigation conforming to international standards, as called for by the Council's presidential statement of 1 June (S/PRST/2010/9).

In January 2009, this Council expressed its concern at the ceasefire violations and the deterioration of the situation in Gaza. We are concerned that the violations persist today. We reiterate our call on all parties to exercise maximum restraint and avoid further

escalation. We call for the complete implementation of resolution 1860 (2009).

The attacks on the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) summer camps in Gaza last month, which set fire to their recreation facilities, were deplorable. We are glad to hear that UNRWA will rebuild the camps to continue with its summer programmes, which are important for the physical and psychological well-being of Gaza's citizens.

On Lebanon, we salute the national unity Government for its efforts in broadening a national consensus that has translated into internal stability. The continued violations of resolution 1701 (2006), such as violations of Lebanese airspace, ground violations of the Blue Line and the lack of enforcement of the arms embargo, are matters of serious concern. The territorial integrity and sovereignty of Lebanon should be respected, and we call on all parties to fully implement resolution 1701 (2006).

Mr. Li Baodong (China) *(spoke in Chinese)*: I wish to thank Under-Secretary-General Pascoe for his briefing. I also listened attentively to the statements of the observer of Palestine and the representative of Israel.

The current situation in the Middle East remains complex and volatile. The early end to tension and confrontation and the achievement of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East are the shared wish of the international community. China maintains, as always, that political negotiations are the only way to solve the Middle East question. We support negotiations between Palestine and Israel so that they can live side by side in peace as two States.

We welcome the launching of proximity talks between Palestine and Israel, and we urge both sides to build up their faith in peaceful negotiations and to solve the issues of security, borders, settlements, refugees and the status of Jerusalem in a comprehensive, just and sustainable manner. At this stage, the international community should make greater effort to push for a new momentum for negotiations so as to reinvigorate the Middle East peace process.

The parties concerned must demonstrate political will, enhance mutual trust, make courageous compromises and avoid any action that could undermine mutual trust, obstruct the negotiations or prejudge the outcome of the negotiations. We oppose Israel's recent approval of the construction of new housing in East Jerusalem and its demolition of Palestinian structures. Not only has this complicated the situation, but it will also hurt the negotiation process. We urge Israel to completely cease all settlement and wall construction in the occupied Palestinian territory, including the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

The humanitarian situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, and the Gaza Strip in particular, remains grim. Israel's blockade has inflicted great suffering on more than 1 million residents of Gaza, whose rights to life and development have been gravely violated. This state of affairs is unacceptable and must not be sustained. We call on the international community to continue to follow these developments closely and to provide greater assistance to the people of Gaza.

We welcome the fact that Israel has recently eased its restrictions on the flow of some humanitarian aid and commercial goods to Gaza, and we call on Israel to put a complete end to its blockade of Gaza and let the people of Gaza resume their normal, dignified existence and livelihood and regain their space for development.

The Israeli attack of 31 May against a flotilla transporting humanitarian aid to Gaza was unfortunate. Such incidents must not recur. We support fair, impartial, credible and transparent investigations conforming to the spirit of the United Nations Charter and based on the principles established in the presidential statement of 1 June (S/PRST/2010/9).

As always, China supports Palestine in its just cause of establishing an independent State. We hope that all Palestinian parties will work in their long-term national interest and stay united in their efforts to establish an independent State of Palestine and ensure a bright future of peace and steady development. China supports the early establishment of an independent State of Palestine through the two-State solution on the basis of relevant United Nations resolutions, the Arab Peace Initiative, the principle of land for peace and the Road Map, so that Palestine and Israel can live side by side in peace as two States. We will continue to make greater efforts to this end alongside the international community.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Nigeria.

I, too, would like to thank Mr. Lynn Pascoe for his very detailed briefing on the current situation in the Middle East. It is clear that, in the weeks following the tragic events of 31 May, important lessons have been learned by all parties. While the incident and its consequences are most regrettable, we welcome the decision of the Israeli authorities to ease the restrictions on goods entering the Gaza Strip by land. Commendable as this step is, we believe that a complete and unconditional lifting of the ban is imperative to bringing an end to the humanitarian crisis that has resulted from the Gaza blockade. The blockade is indeed a collective punishment meted out on innocent people in Gaza, and we hope Israel will live up to its obligations under international humanitarian law.

We commend the positive role played by the Egyptian authorities in averting yet another confrontation by allowing an aid vessel to unload its cargo at Al-Arish, from where the goods were transported in trucks to the Rafa crossing into Gaza. We encourage such prudence and circumspection by all sides in handling similar situations in the future to avert the use of force.

We note Israel's decision to commission a panel of inquiry led by retired Israeli Supreme Court Justice Jacob Turkel to investigate the flotilla incident. It will be necessary for the panel in its work to meet international standards of independence and transparency, as envisaged in the presidential statement of 1 June (S/PRST/2010/9). The findings of the panel should aim to command credibility and legitimacy. Indeed, there is scope for Israel to consider the well-meaning offer of the Secretary-General to facilitate an impartial and independent investigation of the flotilla incident.

While the past few months have been testing times in the region, the next few months may prove even more trying. The demolition of Palestinian homes last week and the approval of the new settlement in East Jerusalem will no doubt inflame passion and reaction. Therefore we renew our call on Israel to refrain from deliberate acts of provocation. In the same vein, we urge the Palestinians to exercise restraint and also guard against inflammatory rhetoric as well as acts of violence. Mutual confidence is what the two sides need in order to proceed to direct talks, building on the gains of recent rounds of proximity talks. Time is fast running out, and faith in the hope of attaining a two-State solution within 24 months, as envisaged by the Middle East Quartet statement of 19 March 2010 in Moscow, is gradually eroding.

In order to recapture the momentum, we call on all interlocutors, including the Arab League, not to waver in their determination to achieve a lasting peace in the Middle East. In this respect, we welcome the efforts of the Middle East Envoy, Senator George Mitchell, to hold further talks between Israel and the Palestinians. We also welcome the visit of Catherine Ashton to the region, undertaken in an effort to ease the distribution of humanitarian aid in Gaza.

The continued detention of Gilad Shalit without access to visitors does not serve any useful purpose for the peace process. On the contrary, it fuels mistrust and heightens animosity. His unconditional release would create a new atmosphere conducive to peace. Indeed, a prisoner exchange between the Israeli and Palestinian authorities would go a long way towards easing tensions and building much-needed confidence.

Now more than ever, the parties to this dispute need to demonstrate their undivided commitment to peace. They must remove all obstacles to the resumption of direct negotiations to resolve the outstanding permanent status issues.

The Council, for its part, should continue its supportive role in the peace process, fostering security and stability within the occupied Palestinian territory.

For our part, we shall remain firmly committed to the goal of seeing a secure State of Israel living side by side in peace, harmony and security with an independent State of Palestine with recognized borders. While peace in the Middle East is attainable, it must be underpinned by sustained political will and commitment. The Middle East needs peace, and so does the rest of the world.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

I give the floor to the representative of Egypt.

Mr. Edrees (Egypt): I have the pleasure to address the Security Council today on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, including the Arab Group, which Egypt has the honour to chair this month.

I would like to start by expressing appreciation for the convening of this debate to address the situation in the Middle East, including the question of Palestine. It takes place at a time when endeavours continue to be made to support and advance the resumption of peace process negotiations and to overcome the lack of progress and, in some respects, the deteriorating situation and rising tensions resulting from the ongoing Israeli occupation and the many violations that continue to be perpetrated by the occupying Power. These include its illegal settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territory, in particular East Jerusalem, and its continuing imposition of a blockade on Gaza.

Despite all serious efforts to relaunch direct negotiations towards the attainment of the well-known and internationally-supported objectives of the peace process, a just and lasting settlement to the question of Palestine regrettably remains far from being achieved, as Israel, the occupying Power, continues to carry out illegal policies and practices that are totally contradictory to an outcome based on a two-State solution on the basis of the 1967 borders.

In the light of the ongoing situation, the Non-Aligned Movement reiterates its call for the international community to be resolute in demanding that Israel, the occupying Power, abide by its legal obligations under the Fourth Geneva Convention, respect the relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions and comply with its Road Map obligations.

Israel must cease all of its violations and unlawful measures, including its policies of collective punishment and colonization in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem. This is essential to creating an environment conducive to the launching of direct negotiations on all core issues, which must be conducted within a fixed time frame and in good faith, in accordance with the agreed principles and terms of reference of the peace process, namely Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973), 1397 (2002), 1515 (2003) and 1850 (2008), the Madrid terms of reference including the principle of land for peace, the Arab Peace Initiative and the Quartet Road Map.

While the Palestinian Authority has repeatedly affirmed its determination, with Arab support, to pursue the path of peace, security and State-building, Israel continues to fail to abide by its obligations and continues to blatantly impede efforts to resume direct negotiations, through a series of measures that only further aggravate the situation. These include the 31 May military attack on the civilian maritime convoy carrying humanitarian assistance to Gaza to alleviate the suffering of the Palestinian civilian population under Israel's blockade.

The Non-Aligned Movement reiterates its condemnation of Israel's use of force against the civilian maritime convoy and calls upon the Secretary-General to initiate a full, impartial, transparent, independent and credible investigation, as demanded by the Security Council. Further, the Movement fully supports the demand of the Human Rights Council, through its resolution 14/1, for an accountable and fully independent investigation into the matter.

The Non-Aligned Movement believes that justice must prevail and that the unacceptable and unsustainable situation in the Gaza Strip must end. The unresolved crisis of Gaza continues to have negative repercussions on efforts to advance peace and inflicts deep suffering on the Palestinian civilian population there. We reiterate, in this regard, that international humanitarian law, in particular the Fourth Geneva Convention, and the relevant United Nations resolutions, must be fully applied and respected by Israel, the occupying Power. The Non-Aligned Movement demands that Israel immediately lift its blockade, in compliance with Security Council resolution 1860 (2009), General Assembly resolution ES-10/18 and other relevant United Nations resolutions in this regard.

We still believe that the international community must play its rightful and obligatory role by taking the necessary action to halt all illegal measures taken by Israel in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem.

The Non-Aligned Movement expresses deep concern regarding the extensive damage caused by Israeli settlements in the West Bank, the separation wall and the network of hundreds of checkpoints that the occupying Power continues to impose, which are undermining the contiguity, integrity, viability and unity of the Palestinian territory, isolating East Jerusalem and seriously jeopardizing the prospects for physically achieving the two-State solution.

The international community, represented by the United Nations, must take clear action to ensure that violations are swiftly brought to an end and replaced by concerted endeavours for peace, in line with relevant United Nations resolutions and the Charter.

Turning now to Lebanon, the Non-Aligned Movement remains deeply concerned over Israel's ongoing violations of Lebanon's sovereignty, in breach of Security Council resolution 1701 (2006). The Movement calls for the full implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) by all parties in order to end the current fragility and to avoid the recurrence of violence.

Concerning the occupied Syrian Golan, the Non-Aligned Movement reaffirms that all measures and actions taken or to be taken by Israel, the occupying Power, to alter the legal, physical or demographic status of the occupied Syrian Golan, as well as Israeli measures to impose jurisdiction and administration there, are null and void and have no legal effect. The Non-Aligned Movement demands that Israel abide by resolution 497 (1981) and withdraw fully from the occupied Syrian Golan to the borders of 4 June 1967, in implementation of resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

I do not need to state that if the ongoing Israeli measures are not stopped and remedied, their consequences will lead to the further destabilization of the situation in the region, with far-reaching repercussions. Tangible progress in the peace process is vital and would contribute to a positive dynamic. This requires Israel to cease immediately and completely its illegal policies and measures in Gaza and the West Bank, including in and around East Jerusalem, and that it finally commit to the terms of reference of the peace process and uphold its legal obligations and commitments in this regard. The international community has to take the lead by reaffirming clear parameters for the negotiating process on all core issues and by helping the parties to reach agreed solutions based on United Nations resolutions, the Madrid terms of reference and agreements reached between the parties.

To conclude, the Non-Aligned Movement reiterates its call for serious and concrete actions from the Security Council, stressing in this regard the permanent responsibility of the United Nations towards the question of Palestine until it is resolved justly and satisfactorily in all respects. This is a responsibility from which the Security Council cannot be absolved, particularly in the light of its responsibility under the Charter of the United Nations for the maintenance of international peace and security, which cannot be achieved as long as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the Arab-Israeli conflict as a whole continue to fester unresolved, with their wide-ranging impact on the region and beyond.

The President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Paul Badji, Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People.

Mr. Badji (*spoke in French*): On behalf of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, allow me to congratulate you, Madam, on the exemplary and effective manner in which you are steering the work of the Council this month. I should also like to congratulate Ambassador Claude Heller, Permanent Representative of Mexico, for his effective guidance of the Council during the month of June.

On behalf of the Committee, I would like to express my appreciation to Mr. Lynn Pascoe, Under Secretary-General for Political Affairs, for his thorough and objective briefing on the situation in the Middle East and the status of the question of Palestine. It clearly showed that the parties and the international community must engage forcefully at this critical juncture to create conditions conducive to the resumption of serious negotiations on all permanent status issues of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

While we all would wholeheartedly welcome serious direct negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians, our Committee is of the view that such negotiations can be successful only in an atmosphere of mutual trust and if the parties are convinced that they will lead to a comprehensive, just and lasting outcome. To that end, the parties must first and foremost implement their respective obligations as established in the Road Map and endorsed by the Council.

Our Committee remains alarmed by the refusal of the Israeli Government to heed the calls of the international community for a complete halt of settlement construction in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem. In spite of the limited moratorium, the pace of construction in certain settlements has not even slowed, as reported by the *New York Times* last week. The Committee calls on

Israel to enforce the moratorium and to extend it indefinitely. The moratorium should also be applied to East Jerusalem. That would certainly be the most important step the Israeli Government could take to contribute to a resumption of direct negotiations between the parties.

The situation in East Jerusalem remains of utmost concern to our Committee. Settlement expansion continues and the city's planning and construction committee approved new housing units in East Jerusalem just last week. House demolitions have resumed, residency rights are being revoked and Palestinian politicians in the city are threatened with deportation. This state of affairs is unacceptable and calls for a swift reaction by the international community. The Committee would like to reiterate its position that Israel's dangerous policies in East Jerusalem risk inciting forceful reactions by large parts of the Muslim world that could lead to violence and even armed conflict. It is the prerogative and obligation of the Security Council to intervene swiftly and resolutely to prevent a possible escalation of violence.

It will be six years this month that the International Court of Justice rendered the historic advisory opinion determining that the construction by Israel of the separation barrier within the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, constitutes numerous violations of international law. The International Court of Justice concluded that such violations engaged Israel's responsibility to cease construction, dismantle the existing sections in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, and provide reparations, including restitution of confiscated property and compensation for damages incurred.

However, construction of the wall has continued at the same pace, cutting thousands of Palestinians off from their lands, families, schools and hospitals. Our Committee is disturbed by the impunity with which these legal obligations have long been flouted by Israel, and calls on the Security Council to take the required action to ensure respect for and compliance with the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice, the Fourth Geneva Convention and relevant United Nations resolutions.

The deadly raid carried out by the Israeli Defense Forces on 31 May against the unarmed Gaza freedom flotilla was more than a human tragedy. That incident and the ease with which Israel has avoided an impartial investigation into its actions clearly demonstrate that politics often trump accountability to the law.

While our Committee acknowledges the value of internal investigations at the national level, it fully supports the Secretary-General's recommendation for an international investigation under United Nations auspices. Only after a truly impartial accounting of the events of 31 May will all parties be satisfied that those responsible for violations of international law will be held to account.

Our Committee also follows closely the repercussions of the Goldstone report (A/HRC/12/48). We maintain that the report of the United Nations Fact Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict, established by the Human Rights Council and led by Justice Richard Goldstone, presents a comprehensive, balanced and authoritative account of the 2008-2009 Israeli incursion into Gaza. While our Committee recognizes the value of the Israeli Government's recent examination of some specific allegations in the Goldstone report, it also calls for a comprehensive investigation into the actions of the parties and demands follow-up action. The Committee advocates the creation by the Security Council of an independent committee of experts to monitor the ongoing investigations on both sides.

Since the Council's last open debate under this agenda item (6298th meeting), our Committee has held two international meetings — one in Istanbul, Turkey, and the other in Rabat, Kingdom of Morocco — to support the resumption of the peace process.

The Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People remains committed to achieving the two-State solution, whereby Israel and the future Palestinian State will live side by side in peace and security. The United Nations, and the Security Council in particular, have a special responsibility in the realization of this vision. I assure the Council of the Committee's cooperation and support in implementing its resolutions on the Palestinian question.

The President: I thank Mr. Badji for his statement. I now give the floor to the representative of Norway.

Ms. Enge (Norway): With key deadlines and expiration dates fast approaching, September seems set to mark a critical juncture in the search for a negotiated

two-State solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Our shared hope is that serious and substantive negotiations on the permanent-status issues will be under way before that decisive point in time. Direct negotiations may also serve to lock in the modest achievements of the past year and extend and expand them in accordance with key Road Map obligations.

As chair of the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee (AHLC), Norway has repeatedly stressed the need for a clear political horizon in order to justify the high levels of international donor support to the Palestinian State-building project. Earnest negotiations, backed by good-faith efforts to create a favourable environment on the ground, are essential to keep the two-State solution clearly in sight. A credible process for the political track, within the time frame set by the Middle East Quartet, will help to sustain the donor community's commitment to the parallel effort to build a Palestinian State from the bottom up. On the economic track, the plan of the Fayyad Government to prepare for Palestinian statehood within two years remains the platform on which to centre our continued support.

Ultimately, Palestinian statehood cannot be realized without Gaza as an integral part of the future Palestinian State. The West Bank and Gaza must sooner or later be reintegrated as one territorial, political and economic unit. The recent Israeli decision to ease the blockade of Gaza is a welcome step in the right direction. Now the immediate challenge is to ensure prompt and effective implementation of the ensuing measures. We are confident that this can be done without prejudice to legitimate Israeli security concerns.

In line with Security Council resolution 1860 (2009), the AHLC is taking an active part in facilitating those efforts. Through the Joint Liaison Committee — a subcommittee of the AHLC — discussions are under way between Israel, the Palestinian Authority and international partners to work out the modalities for implementation of the package.

The reopening of traffic in and out of Gaza is not just a question of stocking the shelves with legally imported goods, nor is it really an issue of letting in construction materials, however important that is for the reconstruction of Gaza. The overriding objective must be to allow for inbound supplies and outbound exports on a commercial scale that will foster the reversal of the dramatic de-development of Gaza. That requires strengthened capacity and more efficient control procedures at the border crossings.

And let us not forget: it is just as vital to lift the blockade on people. The people of Gaza cannot be fenced in indefinitely. They must be allowed to exercise their right to freedom of movement. At the end of the day, the impoverished people of Gaza should have the opportunity to claim their rightful place in, and make their indispensable contribution to, a future Palestinian State, living side by side with Israel in peace and security.

The President: There are still a number of speakers remaining on my list for this meeting. I intend, with the concurrence of the members of the Council, to suspend the meeting until 3 p.m.

The meeting was suspended at 1 p.m.